

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR LAWYER

Each case is as unique as you are. You are purchasing a service rather than a product. A service renders benefits but those benefits may not be tangible at first. However, following these guidelines will help you get the most out of your lawyer in the most cost-effective way.

Tell Your Lawyer All of the Facts

You need to tell your lawyer the good, bad, and the ugly. Do not keep secrets hoping that she will not find out, or worse, that the opposing attorney will not find out. The opposing attorney will utilize every bit of damaging information against you and in the worst possible light. We need to know any potentially damaging evidence or facts beforehand so that we may be able to defend you in the courtroom. Please do not think that there is something that is so terrible that we have never heard it before. Assume that everything is important.

Make an Appointment with your Lawyer

This office operates on the appointment method as do most doctor's and lawyer's offices. An unexpected interruption in our schedule disrupts our productivity, and decreases our ability to focus on your specific needs. If you have issues that need to be addressed, please contact the office and set up a specific time to talk with us on the phone or in person. That way, we can give you our full attention without interruption. Either that, or use one of our other forms of communication as set out in paragraph 3 below.

Please remember that you are charged in .25 hourly increments. The best way to make use of your time is to be sure you have your thoughts and questions organized before talking with the lawyer or legal assistant.

Utilize other Forms of Communication

With new technology, there are additional ways to get our full attention. Make use of our e-mail lisa@hoppescutrer.com, anita@hoppescutrer.com or the fax machine (817-283-5040), or the good ole U.S. postal service (1901 Central Drive, Ste. 500 Bedford, TX 76021). Even when we are in court or in consultation in the office, these methods of communication allow your lawyer to read your questions at a time when there are no distractions.

Be Patient with Your Lawyer Returning your Phone Calls

As a rule, it is next to impossible to get your lawyer on the phone (just like your doctor) unless you have made an appointment to do so. This is understandably a frustrating concept to grasp, but it goes back to the issue of personal attention to your case.

We are a small but very busy law firm. We are good at what we do and we make every attempt to give each of you personal attention. However, we are often in court, at depositions, researching a case, preparing for trial, at a required continuing legal education seminar or conferencing with new or current clients. We are not solely in control of our schedules, and often subject to the Court's docket, or other lawyer's hearing settings.



If you do call, we do our best to return your call as promptly as possible. In order to get a quicker response, we suggest that you always leave a detailed message on the answering machine or with one of our legal assistants as to your questions, so that the lawyer can be fully prepared to talk to you when she calls back. Better yet, use e-mail, fax, or make a phone or office appointment.

Our staff operates under the same rules of confidentiality that we do, and you should feel free to give them specific information. Similarly, our voice mail is private, and any messages you leave are confidential as well.

DISCLAIMER: Although we have not had trouble in the past using e-mail, security is not perfected. Please note that there is still a possibility of a third party hacking into e-mail, so if you use e-mail to exchange information or questions with us, we take no responsibility for third party misconduct. Use at your own risk.

Please remember, that our legal assistants cannot give legal advice. They can however, relay a message from your attorney. The only way for that to be effective is for you to leave a specific and detailed message.

Listen to Your Lawyer, not your Friends or Family

You will be faced with outside pressure and opinions from your friends and family. Although they may have good motives, they are not lawyers, and even well-intended advice from a non-lawyer could hurt your case and your relationship with your lawyer.

We often hear a client say that they know someone who got a better deal than they are getting. The facts in your case are unique. We carefully consider the individual facts of your case, and make decisions based on those special circumstances. Non-lawyers do not know how to look at your case and apply the law as well. You have to make up your mind that the advice your lawyer gives you is sound, even if it is not what you want to hear.

Pay your Attorneys Fees

Our hourly fees are competitive with the local standard. It should be understood from the beginning that you will pay as outlined in your contract. If your case is important to you, then you should make sure your lawyer is paid. Your case should be a priority to you and we expect you to take it seriously. If you are not paying attention to paying your bill, that is a signal to the lawyer that you do not take this matter seriously. When paying your bill, please remember that zero is easy for us to calculate. You need to pay something when you are billed.

We will ask for your spouse or ex-spouse to pay your attorneys fees in most cases, but experience has taught us that the likelihood of collecting fees from your spouse or ex-spouse is not particularly good. Therefore, you will be responsible for the fees which are incurred by this office on your behalf. If payment is received from your spouse or ex-spouse, then it will be applied to your outstanding balance and the difference will be refunded to you.

We make every attempt to keep your fees as low as possible. Even so, the actions of your spouse or your spouse's attorney often require action on our part and we must charge you for that. There are no flat fees and although the lawyer may give you an estimate, it is just that, an estimate. All work by either the lawyer or the legal assistant is charged for, including time spent on the phone.



You may be able to reduce your fees significantly by giving us your full and timely cooperation. Information gathering that can be adequately and timely done by you, the client, saves lawyer time and keeps fees down. A client that carefully follows instructions of the lawyer is likely to reduce the overall cost of legal representation.

We know attorney fees are expensive, and in a family law case, it is usually an additional expense at the worst financial time of your life. Even so, the cost of maintaining a law office is significant. We must maintain computers, employees, phone lines, supplies, copiers, fax machines, and other tools of the trade at all times in order to properly represent you. If you do not pay your fees, we cannot adequately maintain the law office, and therefore cannot give you the service you deserve.